



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling

For Your Information...

Shopping with the Environment in Mind

Everybody shops. But not everybody realizes how environmentally important it is to shop consciously. It is important when buying to make choices that support responsible products and packaging, make recycling easier and reduce the amount of garbage that is thrown away. The following recycling tips focus on supermarket shopping because that's the kind of shopping we do most frequently. But these ideas apply to other forms of shopping, too.

Bring your own reusable shopping bags.

This is the best way to avoid the paper versus plastic dilemma. Durable canvas or string bags are light and convenient to carry and can be used thousands of times. Reusable bags can easily become a habit and save an astonishing amount of paper and plastic over time.

Buy recycled paper packaging.

Pass up polystyrene (styrofoam) egg cartons and choose cardboard instead, which are made from recycled newsprint. For paper boxes (such as cereal boxes), the rule of thumb is: if the unprinted side is gray, it's made from recycled material. Most cereal boxes have the "100% Recycled Paperboard" logo on them.

Buy in bulk.

This not only uses less total packaging, it also saves you money. Buy large single containers instead of the

same volume in many smaller containers (e.g., six packs versus two-liter bottles). For any item with a long or unlimited shelf life (e.g., laundry detergent) or non-perishable foods you use regularly (e.g., cereals and grains), buy the biggest container you can. Put manageable amounts in reusable, smaller containers for everyday use.

Avoid throw-away products.

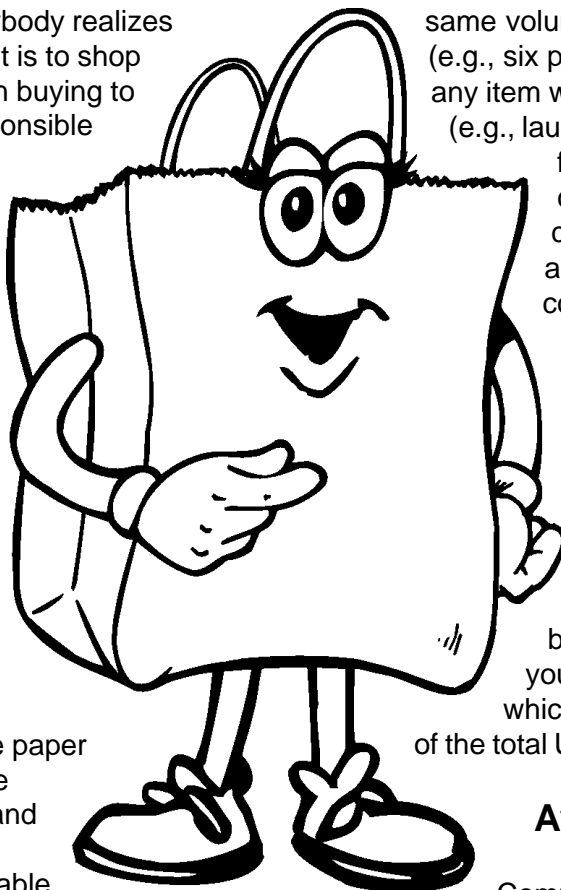
Avoid single or limited-use items such as plastic razors, cigarette lighters, throw-away cleansing pads, non-refillable pens and foil baking pans. Reduce or eliminate your use of disposable plastic diapers, which account for a startling two percent of the total U.S. landfill volume.

Avoid excess packaging.

Compare the size of the package to the size of the product. If the package is designed to take up as much shelf space as possible, choose a competing product. Do without products that are packaged inside more than one layer. Multi-pack juice boxes for children, made with layers of cardboard, plastic, aluminum and a plastic straw attached, are a particularly wasteful example. Avoid miniaturized "single helping" packages. Buy fruit and vegetables loose. Choose products that are not in plastic trays and that do not have attached promotional materials.

Think 'recycling.'

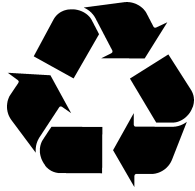
Choose the container that can be recycled in your community. Avoid products that are difficult to recycle (e.g., many "squeezeable" plastics which are made of numerous layers of different plastics).



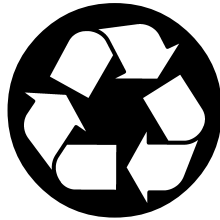
Watch the words.

Beware of the word “recyclable,” which is not the same as “recycled,” the word it closely resembles. Many materials are technically recyclable, but what matters is what you can recycle in your local programs. A recycled product or container is actually made from materials that have been used before.

When shopping, look for the chasing arrows on the products you buy.



Recyclable



Made from Recycled Materials

Recycled Myths

- **Recycled products are inferior in quality.** While this once was a problem, the quality of recycled products has increased in recent years.
- **There are only a few recycled products on the market.** There are now thousands of recycled products being sold, ranging from construction materials, office, school and cleaning supplies to clothing.
- **Recycled products are more expensive than other products.** Recycled products now are priced more competitively with products made from virgin materials. Some even cost less.

REMEMBER: Small changes in everyday behavior can have positive consequences for generations to come.



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling FYIs provide general information on environmental topics. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about solid waste issues, please call **1-800-768-7348** or visit our Web site at **www.scdhec.net/recycle**. Please send written correspondence to: DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.